

KOA's natural combination: Just add camping and franchising

It's a natural! KOA combines camping with franchising to create a work environment that many only dream about

By Heidi Pullar

The year was 1962. Astronaut John Glenn completed three space orbits around the earth and legendary golfer Jack Nicklaus won his first professional tournament. It was a time of prosperity in America, affording American families more leisure time and more money than ever before to travel and to buy the new recreational vehicles (RVs) that were just starting to gain in popularity. Unlike any other time in American history, campers were on the move.

They headed for America's landmarks, national parks, and the World's Fair in Seattle. But motorists and RVers soon discovered that traveling wasn't quite as easy as they had expected. Campgrounds were scarce; and those that did exist were inadequate for this new breed of RV camper.

KOA pioneered the franchised-campground concept

Realizing this trend toward RV camping, a Billings, Montana businessman and a handful of his associates decided to build a full-amenities campground to accommodate the steady stream of motorists and RVers traveling cross-country to the World's Fair. In the summer of 1962, they constructed a campground with restrooms, hot showers, and a convenience store along the banks of the Yellowstone River, not far from where Lewis and Clark made their historic trek a century and a half earlier.

Little did they know that this was the beginning of an exciting new business venture that would impact all of North America. In 1962, the Kampgrounds of America franchise was launched in Billings, Mont.



KOA campers enjoy many services and amenities at the nearly 600 KOA Kampgrounds located across North America.

Camping popularity continues to grow

The popularity of camping skyrocketed during the last three decades. Today it continues to grow as the back-to-basics mentality of the 1990s attracts more families who want to spend quality time together in the great outdoors—without spending a lot of money. Unlike hotels and motels, KOA offers a memorable experience at a price that camping families can afford.

KOA is the world's largest and most recognized system of franchised family campgrounds with nearly 600 locations across the United States and Canada. The moment KOA licensees erect the familiar red, yellow, and black KOA logo, they have an edge over the competition. Today, over 25 million KOA campers have come to recognize this symbol to mean "clean, friendly, and fun".

KOA Kampground ownership and support

For franchisees, owning a KOA

Kampground combines the freedom of an independent outdoor lifestyle with ongoing support to help guide business decisions. "We bought into a system that basically had the only degree of professionalism in the industry," says former independent campground owner Steve Lazor, who now owns the West Granville, Mass., KOA Kampground. "...More than anything, it's the vast amount of knowledge (of the staff) in Billings... You're not left to your own design."

"For anyone thinking about building a brand new campground," says Ron Harris, owner of the Fortuna, Calif., KOA Kampground, "take it from someone who started at a very low level of knowledge in a technical business, the dollars spent on the (KOA) franchise are the cheapest you will ever spend."

For more information on opportunities offered by KOA Kampgrounds, call the KOA Licensing Department at 1-800-548-7239.